

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CU-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05

/104 W

-----292032Z 046117 /44

R 281040Z APR 77

FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5926

INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 0970

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SF, PINS, PINT

SUBJECT: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE MARCH TO JABULANI

REF: JOHANNESBURG 969

YESTERDAY'S (APRIL 27) MARCH TO JABULANI PROVED TO BE A REMARK-
ABLE EVENT IN THAT, FOR ONE DAY AT LEAST, THE BARRIERS
BETWEEN SOWETO POLICE AND STUDENTS CAME DOWN. IN A SITUATION
REMINISCENT OF LAST YEAR'S RIOTS, POLICE WERE CONFRONTED
WITH THOUSANDS OF MARCHING STUDENTS CHANTING 'AMANDLA'
(POER) AND SHOWING CLENCHED FISTS. ACCORDING TO A WITNESS,
SQUADS OF NERVOUS POLICE BLOCKED THE ROAD AS THE STUDENTS CAME
TO A HALT, BACKING UP HUNDREDS OF FEET DOWN THE ROAD.

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THEN THE REMARKABLE HAPPENED. A POLICE MAJOR CARRYING A RIFLE
STEPPED FORWARD WHILE OUT OF THE STUDENT RANKS THREE
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES MAKING PEACE SIGNS DID LIKEWISE. ACC-
ORDING TO THE WITNESS, WHEN THE MAJOR ADVANCED WITH HIS RIFLE,
THE STUDENTS STARTED TO RUN BACK TO THE CROWD. THE MAJOR
THEREUPON PUT HIS RIFLE DOWN AND WALKED OVER TO THE
LINE OF STUDENTS UNARMED. HE THEN SAT DOWN WITH THE THREE

STUDENT LEADERS FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES, BEFORE RETURNING TO THE POLICE RANKS. UPON RETURNING, THE MAJOR CONFERRED FOR A MOMENT WITH BRIGADIER VISSER (SOWETO'S POLICE COMMANDER), BEFORE ORDERING THE LINE OF POLICE TO BREAK AND LET THE STUDENTS PASS PEACEFULLY. WHEN THE STUDENTS SAW THE POLICE OPEN RANKS. THEY SURGED IN AND AROUND THE POLICE, TOUCHING THEM WITH AN ALMOST NAIVE INNOCENCE, CLIMBIN ON BOARD THE POLICE " HIPPO" VANS, AND SOME EVEN CLIMBING INTO POLICE CARS FOR RIDES TO THE JABULANI UBC CENTER WHERE THE PROTEST MEETING WAS TO BE HELD. ACCORDING TO THIS WITNESS, THE ATTITUDE OF THE POLICE MADE A TREMENDOUS IMPCT ON THE STUDENTS WHICH WAS UNFORTUNATELY MARRED LATER WHEN AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE PROTEST MEETING ONE OF THE STUDENT LEADERS EGGED THE CROWD INTO STORMING THE UBC HALL AND POLICE RESPONDED WITH TEAR GAS. THIS WITNESS SAID, IN ANOTHER REMARKABLE TURN OF EVENTS, MOST POLICE WERE NOT ARMED WITH GUNS, ONLY WITH SHIELDS AND STICKS. KIRBY

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